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how the

RURAL COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAM

can help you

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

FS-312

Additional information is available from the 10-minute slide-tape program "Rural Community Fire Protection" and the October 1977 booklet of the same title (PA-1196). These are available through your State Forester.

Revised October 1978

how the Rural Community Fire Protection Program can help you

OBJECTIVES

The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial, technical, and other assistance to State Foresters or other appropriate officials to **organize, train,** and **equip** fire departments in rural areas and communities under 10,000 population to prevent and suppress fires.

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Rural communities need help in extending their fire protection capability.

12,000 people are killed and tens of thousands of persons are scarred physically and emotionally by fire," according to Richard F. Bland, Chairman of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. Much of this loss occurs in rural communities and small towns in America where little or no organized fire protection exists. Citizens in some rural communities have made great progress over the years in establishing fire protection capability, much of it through volunteer fire departments. However, a big job remains to be done, and these communities need help in extending their capability to meet the demands of modern society.

The Rural Community Fire Protection Program (RCFP) is intended to provide this help. Key objectives are saving lives and protecting property in unprotected or inadequately protected rural areas. Preventing or reducing loss of life, protecting financial investments, and enhancing environmental quality will help revitalize rural America. Fire that threatens human life, improve-

ments, and other values in rural areas must be prevented when possible, and controlled promptly once started, to keep losses at a minimum. The 50,000 volunteer fire departments served by more than one million volunteer firefighters, which provide this fire protection, need modern equipment, adequate training, and current advice on techniques of fire prevention and control to help them do this job safely and efficiently.

The Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has a fire prevention and control program of long standing. Through Cooperative Agreements with State Foresters, it is involved in fire protection in rural communities and on forest and watershed lands in all 50 States. The Cooperative Rural Fire Protection Program is administered by the 50 State Foresters and the program administrators of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. It provides financial and technical assistance to rural communities to assist in protecting human life, livestock, wildlife, crops, orchards, farmsteads or other improvements, and other values in rural areas.

From July 1975 to October 1976, a pilot test of the Rural Community Fire Protection Program was conducted by the Secretary of Agriculture. The astounding results of the pilot test are documented in the publication "Rural Community Fire Protection," Program Aid 1196, which is available upon request from your State Forester.The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (PL 95-313) combined several assistance programs to establish a Rural Fire Protection Program which is responsive to the fire protection needs of rural America.

5/4 ton military vehicle converted for firefighting use.

Training for rural firefighters is a qualifying project under the RCFP program.

KEY PROVISIONS

The key provisions of the Act are:

That the program may be funded at an appropriation level of $7 million per year.

That financial assistance on any project during any fiscal year cannot exceed 50 percent of the actual expenditures, including expenditures of local public and private nonprofit organizations participating in the agreement.

That this assistance is available only to communities under 10,000, but groups of smaller communities that serve more than 10,000 people may join together in a combined effort in a qualifying project.

PROCEDURES

There are five steps in the program:

1. Rural communities seeking assistance need to file an application with the administering official.

2. The adminstering official will evaluate each proposal to determine if it qualifies for assistance in accordance with criteria based on the intent of the Act. He will also evaluate each qualifying proposal to determine the priority of the proposed project. Construction of fire service facilities **does not** qualify as a project under the RCFP program.

Some of the priority-determining criteria are whether the program will (a) result in an organization formed under approved fire plans (the formation of fire districts or other legal entities will be encouraged); (b) improve effi-

ciency and safety through wildfire and structural fire training; (c) upgrade personal safety protective gear; (d) create or improve a fire prevention program within the community; (e) make use of Federal excess property to add to fire protection equipment.

3. Communities with qualifying applications will then receive notification from the administering official of availability of the cost-share funds within limits of the appropriation.

4. Notification will be sent to proponents of applications that did not have a high enough priority to be funded for the current year's program with an explanation and any suggestions for future years.

5. Claim for advance reimbursement should be submitted to the administering official by communities with approved projects.

ELIGIBILITY

The requesting community must be under 10,000 population. A group of small communities totalling more than 10,000 population may qualify. A single community of over 10,000 will not.

The request for assistance must be for organizing, planning, training, or equipment.

The community share of the cost must be available at the time of application. This can be in the form of planned contributions in kind, such as volunteer labor in some projects.

Improved fire protection may have prevented this loss!

WHERE TO APPLY

Applications should be made through the State Forester, or in the cases of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, other designated administering officials. The titles, addresses, and telephone numbers of these officials are as follows:

State Forester
Alabama Forestry Commission
513 Madison Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
(205) 832-5896

State Forester
Division of Lands
323 East Fourth Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 279-5586—Ext. 137

State Forester
State Land Department
1624 W. Adams
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(602) 271-4633

State Forester
Arkansas Forestry Commission
3821 West Roosevelt Road
P.O. Box 4523—Asher Station
Little Rock, AR 72214
(501) 371-1733

Chief Deputy State Forester
State Divsion of Forestry
1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-2921

State Forester
Colorado State Forest Service
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
(303) 482-8185 or 491-6303

State Forester
Department of Environmental Protection
Forestry Unit
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06115
(203) 566-4040

State Forester
Delaware Department of Agriculture
Forestry Section
Drawer D
Dover, DE 19901
(302) 678-4419

Director
Division of Forestry
Collins Building
Tallahassee, FL 32304
(904) 488-4274

Director
Georgia Forestry Commission
P.O. Box 819
Macon, GA 31202
(912) 744-3237

Chief
Division of Forestry
Government of Guam
Agana, Guam 96910

State Forester
Division of Forestry
1131 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 548-5930

Director
Idaho Department of Lands
State Capitol Building
Boise, ID 83720
(208) 384-3284

Supervisor
Division of Forestry
RR #5, Conservation Area
Springfield, IL 62706
(217) 782-2361

State Forester
Division of Forestry
613 State Office Building
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 633-6517

State Forester
State Conservation Commission
Wallace State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 281-5629

State and Extension Forester
Forestry Building
2610 Claflin Road
Manhattan, KS 66502
(913) 532-5752

Director
Kentucky Division of Forestry
618 Teton Trail
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 564-4496

State Forester
Louisiana Forestry Commission
P.O. Box 1628
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
(504) 389-7361

Director
Bureau of Forestry
State Office Building
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 289-2275

Director
Forest Service
Tawes State Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
(301) 267-3776

Director
Division of Forests and Parks
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-3184

Chief
Forest Fire Control
Stevens T. Mason Building
Box 30028
Lansing, MI 48909
(517) 373-1218

Director
Division of Forestry
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155
(612) 296-5971

State Forester
Mississippi Forestry Commission
908 Robert E. Lee Building
Jackson, MS 39201
(601) 354-7124

State Forester
Missouri Department of Conservation
2901 North Ten Mile Drive
P.O. Box 180
Jefferson City, MO 65101
(314) 751-4115

Administrator
Division of Forestry
2705 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 728-4300

Chairman and State Forester
Department of Forestry
201 Miller Hall, East Campus
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68503
(402) 472-2944, 2964 or 2963

State Forester
Division of Forestry
201 South Fall Street
Carson City, NV 89701
(702) 885-4350

Director
Division of Resources Development
Box 856, State House Annex
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-2214

State Forester
Bureau of Forestry
P.O. Box 2808
Trenton, NJ 08625
(609) 984-2520

State Forester
Department of State Forestry
P.O. Box 2167
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 827-2312

Director
Division of Lands and Forests
59 Wolf Road
Albany, NY 12233
(518) 457-7430

Director
Division of Forest Resources
512 North Salisbury Street
Archdale Building
Raleigh, NC 27611
(919) 733-3781

State Forester
North Dakota State University
First and Simrall Avenues
Bottineau, ND 58318
(701) 228-2277

Chief
Division of Forestry and Preserves
Fountain Square
Columbus, OH 43224
(614) 466-7842

Director and State Forester
Forestry Division
122 State Capitol Building
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
(405) 521-3886

State Forester
Department of Forestry
2600 State Street
Salem, OR 97310
(503) 378-2511

Director
Bureau of Forestry
P.O. Box 1467
Third and Reily Streets
Harrisburg, PA 17120
(717) 787-2925

Secretary of Department of Natural Resources
Forests, Fish and Wildlife
Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 5887, Pta. de Tierra
San Juan, PR 00906
(809) 723-3090

Chief
Division of Forest Environment
Box 545, RFD #2
North Scituate, RI 02857
(401) 647-3367

State Forester
South Carolina Commission of Forestry
5500 Broad River Road
P.O. Box 287
Columbia, SC 29202
(803) 758-2261

Director
Department of Game, Fish, and Parks
Division of Forestry
Sigurd Anderson Building
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 224-3481

State Forester
Division of Forestry
2611 West End Avenue—Room 302
Nashville, TN 37203
(615) 741-3326

Director
Texas Forest Service
College Station, TX 77843
(713) 845-2641

State Forester
1596 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, UT 84116
(801) 533-5439

Director of Forests
Department of Forests and Parks
State Office Building
Montpelier, VT 05602
(802) 828-3375

State Forester
Virginia Division of Forestry
P.O. Box 3758
Charlottsville, VA 22903
(804) 977-6555

Commissioner of Agriculture
Gov. of Virgin Islands
Estate Lower Love
Kingshill, St. Croix
U.S. VI 00850
(809) 744-8154

Supervisor
Department of Natural Resources
Olympia, WA 98504
(206) 753-5331

State Forester
Department of Natural Resources
1800 Washington Street, E.
Charleston, WV 25305
(304) 348-2788 or 2789

Chief State Forester
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
4610 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53701
(608) 266-2197

State Forester
Wyoming State Forestry Division
113 Capitol Building
Cheyenne, WY 82002
(307) 777-7586

POSSIBLE HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS

"America Burning." the Report of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, provides excellent background material on the priority needs for fire prevention and control. Several chapters pertain wholly or in part to rural areas and small communities.

Planning—Master fire planning at all jurisdictions is a primary key to responding adequately to changing conditions. Local planning especially is needed for a system of fire protection to meet local needs and conditions and anticipated changes in the community. This could be accomplished by calling in fire protection engineers and management consultants to aid in establishing goals and prescribing methods to obtain them. The local community should recognize that outside specialists may be required. The same community must be equally ready to provide input on a broad approach. Activities other than fire suppression will probably result in the most gains. Changes in laws and codes, emphasis on fire prevention, and increased fire safety education and training are examples of approaches which may provide better fire protection for many communities.

Fire Safety Education—The National Fire Protection Association and the Fire Marshall's Association of North America have developed Operation EDITH (Exit Drills In The Home). A community can adopt Operation EDITH and engage in a publicity campaign that encourages families to prepare and rehearse plans to evacuate a house in the event of a fire. Demonstrations showing approved installation of escape ladders and safe evacuation practices enhance the program.

Home Fire Detection—Most American deaths from home fires occur during the nighttime hours. Usually they are the result of smoke, toxic gases, or lack of oxygen—not fire itself. The fire fatality rate is from 2 to 15 times higher in rural areas than in metropolitan areas. Early-warning fire detectors should greatly reduce rural fire deaths. Fire departments should encourage the installation of approved early-warning fire detectors in their fire safety education programs and in the course of their residential inspections. A project to encourage the use of these detectors, provide information on their installation, and establish a system to check their working order would be beneficial.

These are only a few examples. Efforts that go beyond the concept of fire suppression oriented apparatus and facilities are likely to make the most significant gains.

RELATED PROGRAMS

Section 2 of the Clarke-McNary Act of 1924, which authorized the Forest Service to cooperate with the States to provide fire protection to forest and watershed lands, is a well established, closely related program, also administered by the State Foresters.

The assignment of federal excess property to communities is also well established in all States. Guidelines have been prepared and distributed to all Forest Service and State Forestry units outlining procedures and priorities for acquiring federal excess property. Excess military vehicles used to help in fire protection must be converted for safe and efficient use, and proper training must be provided for their safe operation and maintenance.

Loans for essential community facilities—including structures and equipment for fire protection—and loan and grant funds for community water systems are available through the Farmers Home Administration.

The Soil Conservation Service provides assistance in developing water impoundments which may be used for fighting fires.

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